

Questions and Answers about

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

Q What is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)?

A SARS is respiratory illness first reported in Asia that is caused by a virus called, SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV).

Q Could I be exposed to SARS in the United States?

A At this time, it is not likely that you can be exposed to SARS. As of July 2003, less than 10 cases of SARS have been detected in the United States, and all have gotten better. Most of the U.S. cases were from people returning from parts of the world with SARS.

Q What are the signs and symptoms of SARS?

A

- A high fever (temperature higher than 100.4° F or 38.0° C).
- After 2 to 7 days, patients might develop a dry cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Most patients develop pneumonia.

Q How does SARS spread?

A SARS is believed to spread by close person-to-person contact. The most common way people get infected is from someone with SARS sneezing or coughing, and spray gets into someone else's mouth, nose or eyes. Touching things that the SARS patient has sneezed or coughed on can also carry the virus from the hands to the mouth, nose or eyes.

Q Is there treatment for SARS?

A Currently SARS is treated the same way other rare pneumonias are treated, and it works well. People who have received treatment on time have gotten better.

Q What can I do to protect myself against SARS?

A The best way to prevent the spread of most diseases is by frequent hand washing with soap and water or use of alcohol-based hand rub. Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands. Ask people around you to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

Q Where can I get more information about SARS?

A The Los Angeles County Health Department runs a free information line 1-800-989-5255, in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Q How do I know which countries have travel recommendations for SARS?

A Please visit www.cdc.gov and look for travel alerts or advisories to the country you plan to visit under Travelers' Health.

Your local Public Health Center is:

